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ABSTRACT

This guide to supermarket shopping provides information in an outline format. It first covers preliminary activities such as determining family needs, shopping on a budget, and planning at home. A number of suggestions are then made for the actual shopping. Topics include shopper aids (unit pricing, nutritional labeling, freshness coding), store layout, unadvertised specials, reading labels, buying in season, buying in large quantity, comparison shopping, substitution, and alertness at the checkout counter. Attachments include a true/false food shoppers IQ test and a sample shopping list. (YLB)

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Enjoy Life in the Fast Lane

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Food Buying Techniques In Taming The Wild Food Bill

In a person's lifetime, approximately $100,000 will be spent for food. We can cope with rapidly rising food prices without affecting good nutrition, or the pleasure of eating. There are ways to become a more informed and value conscious food shopper as follows:

I. Determining Family Needs

A. Financial - Amount of income available for food.

B. Dietary - Medical problems requiring certain foods.

C. Family Preferences - An unlearning of poor eating and food buying habits is a must. We should consider eating less for better health and saving money.

II. Shopping on $30.00 Or Less Per Week

A. Having an "I Can" attitude - Motivated to become a Super Shopper - getting the most for one's hard earned income.

B. Forming a Family Commitment - Create a teamwork approach.

III. Pre-Planning at Home

A. Inventory of Food on Hand - Check the cabinets and refrigerator or freezer.

B. Reading newspaper food ads and articles and store fliers.

C. Advance Menu Planning - Try preparing for weekly meals or at least for a 3 day period.

D. Preparation of a Comprehensive Shopping List - Use columns listing prices of items, stores to be shopped, items in short supply, and substitutions to be made.

E. Careful selection of coupons - Coupons are an inducement to buy. If used carefully, they can be helpful in cutting our food bills.

F. Having a snack to alleviate hunger and thus help to resist impulse buying.

G. Prepare to pay in cash and do not bring more than $3.00 extra so the shopper will not be tempted to spend more than budgeted. Using a check makes it too convenient and too tempting to buy things that are not needed.

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Super Shoppers United

H. Shopping alone is generally preferred - Shopping with the husband can add up to $5.00 more to the food bill. Also, try to leave the children, grandchildren, and spendthrift girlfriends at home. If children are to be along, have them conduct an educational Treasure Hunt to see if they can find the best buys.

I. Comparison shopping is a must - Remember no one store has all the best buys. Items will be offered by grocers to lure shoppers into their stores at bargain prices. Stores try to build and hold store loyalty.

J. Use recipes and food buying tips given by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and local consumer organizations.

IV. In the Supermarket

A. Shopper Aids

1. Unit Pricing - Enable the shopper to compare the cost of similar products of various sizes by weight, volume or count.

2. Nutritional Labeling - Something new that was added to food labels. All fortified foods for which a nutritional claim is made, must display nutritional information on the labels. Also, besides name, weight, and ingredients, the label tells us what nutritional value is in the food. Calories, protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamin A and C, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, calcium, and iron must appear in a standard format, and unless space does not permit, always on the part of the label to the right of the main panel. Having the nutrients always listed in the same order and location makes it easier for the shopper to compare labels. The listing of cholesterol, fatty acid and sodium content is optional.

3. Freshness Coding - The date marked on all perishable foods is the pull date, the last day on which the product can remain on the shelf in the store. It is not a spoil date. Such products should still be good to eat for at least a week and in some cases even longer.

B. Store Layout - List items on shopping list by departments to save steps and avoid forgetting anything and having to retrack and be tempted by alluring food items. Fancy packaging and displays are displayed to appeal to our wants and wishes. Motivational experts are available to the store management. The store manager has surveys available showing how shoppers shop and the patterns they use.

C. Be alert to unadvertised specials - These are items reduced in price to award the alert shopper.

D. Name brands versus store or private brands - Name brands are sold in almost all stores and advertised nationally. They are usually available in only one quality. Different stores have different store brands and are not nationally known. They are usually cheaper than name brands. Be a brand switcher and save.

E. Be a label reader to set a better table. Use labels to compare the cost per serving of similar foods. The ingredient with the greatest quantity must be listed first. Meat balls with spaghetti is not the same as spaghetti with meat balls. By reading labels, we can find less costly substitutes for more expensive foods. The Food and Drug Administration has proposed that the drained weight of canned fruits and vegetables be stated on the label of those foods. The drained weight is the amount of solid food in the can. This weight includes the water, syrup or other liquid in which the fruit or vegetable is packed. The proposed declaration of drained weight is intended to help consumers know how much actual product is in the can and thereby make value comparisons among different brands.

F. Buy by weight and not be size as the apparent size can be misleading. Check the weight against the price, then you know you are getting the best value.

G. Compare different forms of foods (fresh, canned, frozen, chilled, and dried) for the best buy. For example, it is uneconomical to buy the best appearing tomato to be used in a casserole. Use powdered, dry milk as a beverage or in cooking and see the savings.

H. Buy in season, but do not buy the first of a crop. Prices usually go down as supply increases. We pay a premium for the convenience and enjoyment of buying out of season.

I. Buy in large quantity generally. An example would be a 3 dozen box of eggs. However, the family size is not a bargain if we wind up throwing it out. Remove the desired number of items (6 oranges from a dozen in a bag). By checking the price and quantity of an item, we can determine if 2 smaller cans are a better purchase than a larger can.

J. Comparison shopping in different supermarkets - No one store has all the good buys. Also, compare food items within each store to determine the best purchase.

K. Try cheaper cuts. When calves' liver is selling for $1.89 a pound and beef liver at $1.09, pork liver may be available at even a greater saving.

L. Learn to substitute among protein foods as prices dictate. Try poultry rather than red meats, and beans, cheese and egg dishes rather than meat dishes.

M. Buy by the serving. Do not ignore the more expensive boneless cuts of meat. Though bony meats are cheaper per pound, they yield less meat per pound. Figure a serving as 1/4 to 1/3 pound for boneless cuts, 1/2 pound for meats with bones (rib roasts); 3/4 to 1 pound for very bony cuts (spare ribs).

N. Turn to leftovers. Leftover steak chicken or turkey bones and salad greens can be the beginnings of delicious stock for soups, stews, and casseroles. Leftover meats and vegetables can be cut into strips or cubes and mixed with salad greens or rice for a main course.

O. Time Shopping - Remember studies show shopping over 30 minutes will mean for every minute thereafter, 50¢ is spent.

P. Buy less non-nutritional snacks, luxury items, and convenience foods.

Q. Check and check again at the checkout counter.

1. Arrange your purchases in groups whenever possible.

2. Compare the number of items bought with the number of items on the cash register receipt.

3. Know your prices and compare with checker totals.

4. Double check when you get home.

5. If you discover an error, return to the store.

6. Seek refund if unsatisfied with a product.

Remember that the checkout is the last place where the shopper can be enticed by the grocer to spend some more money. Candies and magazines are conveniently displayed to allure the shopper to satisfy the sweet tooth and to appeal to the fantasies of a faraway place to soothe the shopping ordeal.

Eating nutritiously within the limits of our income involves wise planning, skillful shopping and proper food preparation and utilization. We must continue to use coupons for food that are needed and buy bargains too.

FOOD SHOPPERS IQ

Answer the following statements with a True or False Answer

_____ 1. The written shopping list is utilized by food shoppers with regularity.

_____ 2. Knowing unit pricing and nutritional labeling is of little value in saving food dollars.

_____ 3. The cost per pound of meat, fish, or produce is the reliable buying guide.

_____ 4. Buy the best quality and always expect to receive the most value for your money.

_____ 5. Fresh milk has more nutritional value and is usually a more economical purchase than non-fat dry powdered milk.

_____ 6. It can be assumed that canned food will be the most economical purchase.

_____ 7. Buy the largest container and save without any further consideration.

_____ 8. All convenient foods should be avoided because they cost more.

_____ 9. Family needs, personal values, and resources influence food buying decisions.

_____ 10. Shop with your husband or best friend as two heads are better than one.

Answers: 1. False 2. False 3. False 4. False 5. False
6. False 7. False 8. False 9. True 10. False

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WEEK OF _____ SHOPPING LIST

Four Basic Food Groups

ITEMS IN SHORT SUPPLY	MEAT GROUP	MILK AND DAIRY GROUP	FRUITS & VEGETABLES	BREAD & CEREALS	SUBSTITUTES
	Jewel Price	Dominick Price Breslers Osco-Ice Cream	Jewel Price	Jewel Price	Jewel Price
	Dominick Price	Jewel Price	Dominick Price	Dominick Price	Dominick Price
	National Price	National Price	National Price	National Price	National Price
TOTAL					

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